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Monsters and the Quest for Balance in Native Northwest California[1]

This article explores traditions of manlike monsters in the folklore of Algonquian groups in northwest California and draws comparisons with Sasquatch phenomena. The author tabulates significant features of the monsters and finds that they are thought to be destructive and frequently maneating, to possess magical wealth, skill, or spirit power, and to dwell at the margins of the physical world where the zones of earth, air, or water intersect. He sees myths of confrontation and domination of such creatures as representing the individual's attempt to master and integrate within himself those forces of man and nature which are in opposition or complementary to those values which society approves; through acceptance and incorporation of the negative, the individual achieves psychological balance and harmony with nature.

Bigfoot has stirred imaginations in mountainous, riverine northwestern California as elsewhere during the past few years. The town of Willow Creek, on the Trinity River near the Hupa Indian reservation, sports a large sign advertising the village as "The Gateway to Bigfoot Country." Indeed, the creature today called Bigfoot seems clearly to have been a figure of some concern in native northwestern California since aboriginal times. This paper will explore the beliefs of the Hupa, Karok, Tolowa, several smaller, largely Athapascan-speaking groups, and, most especially, the Yurok, as they relate to the Bigfoot and other monstrous beings.

A Karok myth published by Harrington[2] relates how an "upslope person" (*maruk?ara'ar*) kidnapped and devoured Long Billed Dowitcher Old Man's children. Dowitcher in turn killed the "upslope person" and restored his children to life by soaking their bones in a power-granting alpine lake near the monster's lair. Harrington notes that the "upslope persons" were "hairy, large, strong, stupid, crude, and were sometimes seen by Indians in the woods.[3] They lived in rocky dells far upslope. Some of the younger Indians call them 'gorillas'."

A Yurok myth collected by Kroeber is of interest here as well. It concerns a young woman who, after disappearing from a Karok village near present-day Bluff Creek (in Yurok territory), reappeared with a newborn child and five baskets made of dentalia shells, a much sought-after item of treasure.

She had married a "giant, one of four brothers who stepped from ridge to ridge and shouted loudly."[4] The myth is doubly interesting because, first, it has today been transformed into the "true story" of a young woman who "married Bigfoot" and, second, because some Yurok today say that Bigfoot fishes in Big Foot Creek at a point near where it joins Bluff Creek in the mountains to the north of the Klamath, near the location of the1967 shooting of a film by Roger Patterson which purports to show a Bigfoot in her customary habitat.

But the information we can gather about Bigfoot in this area presents major problems for the ethnographer who would understand it. For example, the Karok seem to make a distinction between the "upslope person" (maruk? ara'ar) and the "Indian devil," a sorcerer. However, for the neighbouring Tolowa, what appear to be similar "woods devils" are "wild hairy beings of human form" who whistle, annoy hunters, and put out campfires, but do no real harm, although human sorcerers can obtain fire-emitting magical tools from them.[5] Similarly, the Yurok have a "creek devil" (*ra·k ni ʔumaʔah*), or "brush devil" (*ka·p ni ʔumaʔah*), which some people today assert is Bigfoot. Others, however, claim that he is simply a human sorcerer who wears animal disguises and gives off flames and sparks as he runs, barking and whistling, in the woods, putting out travelers' fires and working mischief.

The issue is complex. The Yurok word *ʔumaʔah* is polysemic, variously meaning a human sorcerer, his kit of magical arrows, his 'power', and, possibly, a Bigfoot-like, non-human denizen of the deep woods. Yet "creek devil" (ra·k ni ʔumaʔah) can also refer to "wild Indians," semi-feral humans ostracized from conventional society. These "wild Indians" are said to have banded together in outlaw communities in inaccessible reaches of creek canyons from which they issue forth to harass the good hamlets along the coast and the Klamath River. Further, they are asserted to practice sorcery: to be ʔumaʔah. The Bigfoot, too, is said to live in hidden villages composed of family groups.

I have recently collected a Yurok myth specifically said to be about Bigfoot. The myth tells of a Yurok youth living at Fern Canyon (Osegon) on the coast who, after ten days of ascetic training, went up into the hills and captured a ra·k ni ʔumaʔah after wrestling with him all night. The ʔumaʔah paid the youth a good deal of money (dance regalia) to release him, and this payment served to establish the youth as a "rich man," ultimately to become the founder of a powerful lineage.

The problem is further complicated by the attribution to the ʔumaʔah of the ability to emit flames and sparks and Roman-candle-like aerial displays, since this stresses *human* possibilities, and no Yurok mistakes Bigfoot for a human being. All seem to accept him as an animal, and a rather dumb one.

The issue cannot be resolved here. However, the discussion does raise

some interesting questions. In all of the material reviewed, the creature or creatures concerned are directly related to areas considered the loci of power acquisition: lakes, mountains, remote creeks. Secondly, encounters with these creatures all bring human beings wealth (or children, who are closely associated with wealth). In the mythologies of the peoples of northwestern California we find these habitats and wealth-granting powers attributed to a large range of different sorts of 'monsters', among which Bigfoot is but a single, perhaps not terribly important, figure. With cultural change, Bigfoot has emerged as the focal northwestern California monster. To understand the entire category of monsters will, I suggest, tell us a good deal about Bigfoot's meaning within the traditional native world view and, perhaps, something of its symbolic function today.

YUROK MONSTERS

Among the Yurok, monsters fall into several taxonomic classes. These classes and some of their members are sketched briefly here.

The wo·gey

I have shown elsewhere that the primary reference of the nominal form of the Yurok term *wo·gey* includes a wide variety of beings who shared directly in the enhanced spiritual powers held to have been prevalent in the pre-Yurok "beforetime."[6] The category thus includes many beings devoid of physical semblance to the humans who came after them, as well as many whose appearance was either quite human or anomalous. Power ultimately proving beneficial to humanity, not appearance, distinguishes the "before-people." The ultimate beneficence of the enhanced power of the wo·gey however, did not preclude a destructive aspect.

Great Money (*pelin ci·k*) is clearly among the wo·gey. He is a huge, winged *Dentalia indianorum* who lives in the "spirit world." In the beforetime pelin ci·k flew about the world acting as a scout for the hero Pulekukwerek and a companion of the sun; he also swam like other dentalia. His power is enormous, great enough to swallow the sky, and if caught by human beings he brings great wealth and luck.[7] Dentalia in general are held to be eaters of human flesh, and Great Money, although he is not mentioned as a man-eater, is clearly dangerous to humans.[8]

Like Great Money, Great Salmon (*sekoyeu*) lives in the "spirit world." He is inordinately large and a bringer of luck, but also of drowning.[9]

In the mountains lives *pe?pi?r*, variously described as a "water panther," a "small bird with a long bill,"[10] and, more commonly, as a giant lizard. *Pe?pi?r* is regarded as, at once, fearsome—killing unwary mountain travelers

—and, as the venerated guardian of the mountain esoteric precincts, accepting of those who have a right to be there.

The eleven Porpoise Brothers (*kaʔsumig*) lived at Kenek, the centre of the world. There, they trapped and ate people. Pulekukwerek, the hero, defeated them, and afterwards they helped him to create world order, saving him from various dangers.[11]

The Thunders (*łʔohkoł*) and Earthquake (*lewoł*) live in the underworld. They are rough and tough and destructive, but grant strength and bravery powers to young men who reach their home by diving into an alpine lake or into the surf from a seastack.[12]

Long One (*knewollek*) is a gigantic, horned, serpentine sea monster. He is a destroyer,[13] attacking people crossing the Klamath in boats. However, he has upon occasion been caught, in which case he brings hunting luck and wealth.[14] Some have raised him as a "pet" (*kaʔar*),[15] in which capacity he brings good fortune although, if kept too long and if the owner develops too great an attachment, misfortune surely follows.

Obsidian (*loʔogey ni·gem*) is, like Great Money, a personification of a Yurok wealth item, in this case the obsidian blades displayed in the Deerskin Dance.[16] His origins are disputed, some saying that he originated as *vagina dentata* in a woman destroyed by Pulekukwerek, these teeth also providing the original poison for rattlesnakes and sorcerers (*ʔumaʔah*), and others maintaining that he grew in a spring, Atɪpɪ, upstream along the Klamath.[17] He swims in the Klamath and may be caught, bringing wealth to his captor.

In regard to Obsidian, two points that seem to hold true of all of the wo·gey mentioned here should be emphasized. First, like all of these creatures (as well as Bigfoot), Obsidian has a clearly dual nature: he is, as poison, destructive, while at the same time being a bringer of wealth and of power. The second point grows from this first one: Obsidian may only be approached after very stringent ascetic training, meditation, and purification.[18] The same may be said of all of the beings mentioned above (including, as we have seen, Bigfoot). Without such training, always accomplished in the "sweathouse," or men's club (*ʔɪʔgɪ·k*), encounters with these beings can only be disastrous. In this, successful encounters with these monsters directly partake of the complex associated with less dramatic quests by historical Yurok men and women for luck, fighting and curing powers, as well as for wealth.

The Vicious Ones, łmeyur

The class *łmeyur* (from *łmey*, 'vicious', 'dangerous') comprises a variety of malevolent spirits and personifications: Adulterer, Sorcerer, Hired Murderer, the mysterious Ground Double One, Jerusalem Cricket (the bringer of death), Mole, the *ka·mes* (sea serpents much like knewollek), the *saʔał* (sprites that live in springs and bring disease), and others. Many of these were

banished beneath ground by the wo·gey heroes, and all of the others seem to live in water, the ka·mes and the saʔal being the most often mentioned. All are extremely dangerous and destructive. However, like the creatures discussed above, properly approached they bring the supplicant unusual power.[19]

"Ghosts" (*soʔo.*), while not classified as among the łmeyur, might be mentioned here. The soʔo. are gigantic, humanoid skeletons which roam the forested hills at night. They are killers, yet, again, approached correctly by young men "in training," they grant powers of strength and bravery.[20] They seem, inferentially at least, related to both Jerusalem Cricket and to Mole who, together, are responsible for death in the world.

More directly related to the łmeyur Sorcerer (ʔumaʔah) and Hired Murderer are the human sorcerers and outlaws discussed in the beginning. These, too, are 'monstrous', and while renegades (who often acted, in the past, as paid assassins) were simply to be killed on sight, the ʔumaʔah were bound to grant boons of power and wealth if caught.[21] "Creek devils," at least those identified with Bigfoot rather than with outlawed sorcerers ("wild Indians"), paid handsomely in wealth objects when subdued, as we have seen.

"Reptiles," sok, and Dogs

While all of the above monsters share what we might identify as supernatural qualities, there are other categories of creatures which seem to partake of the Yurok monster complex, but which we would consider quite natural. These comprise the class *sok*, "reptiles," which includes all true reptiles (from our point of view) as well as human foetuses. Dogs (*čišah, megokʷ*) may be considered at the same time, although they are not members of the sok class. Dogs, as well as all sok, are considered poisonous, dangerous psychically as well as physically. Nevertheless, these creatures are not simply dangerous: like other monsters discussed above, both the sok and dogs are of dual natures. While highly destructive, many of them are also beneficial to man. Rattlesnakes, for example, while obviously dangerous and to be destroyed, can also serve as spirit-helpers, bringing the supplicant wealth and power.[22] Again, dogs, while polluting and psychically dangerous,[23] are highly useful in hunting and, occasionally, are bringers of good portent; wo·gey dogs heard barking in the mountains bring luck. In one myth, an ascetic young man receives misfortune through becoming overly attached to his old dog but, ultimately, the dog brings him great good luck.[24]

Rattlesnakes, too, are found as pets, although only among the most powerful of families. A Yurok friend says that the last salmon priest at Welkʷew had a pet rattlesnake that served as his house guard, and Lucy Thompson, a Yurok woman writing in the early years of this century, relates that her (very aristocratic) natal house swarmed with rattlesnakes which, however,

were tame and never bit the inhabitants.[25] Untamed rattlesnakes were held to act as protectors of ritual purity, destroying those who broke the stringent rules of the great ceremonies.[26]

FEATURES OF YUROK MONSTERS

Arranging all of the Yurok monsters discussed above in a table, together with four significant features, we are struck by a certain degree of uniformity expressed across the entire spectrum of creatures.

Three consistent features of Yurok monsterhood are immediately apparent in this tabulation, and a fourth will emerge shortly:

1. Yurok monsters are polyvalent (specifically, ambi-valent[27]), both destructive and beneficial.
2. Although essentially wild and antisocial, many of these creatures may either be cultivated as personal guardians or tamed as pets.
3. All monsters are associated with areas which mediate between cosmographic levels.
4. Monsters are all, in a strict sense, anomalies.

The first two features have been clearly suggested by the ethnographic data already presented; the others demand further ethnographic detail.

YUROK COSMOLOGY

As are those of many Californian peoples, the cosmographic scheme of the Yurok is essentially threefold: earth, underworld, upperworld.[28] In the Yurok case, upperworld would seem to include both an "Across-the-ocean-land," beyond the rim of the sky-dome, and a "Skyworld" above the sky-dome. This complex upperworld is sometimes referred to in English, by contemporary Yurok, as the "spirit world." While the three concepts, Across-the-ocean-land, Skyworld, and spirit world are, in fact, subtly discrete, "spirit world" will be used in the following account to refer to the entire upperworld complex, the context being general enough to allow such broad usage. The earth, then, is connected to the spirit world at the periphery described by the rim of the sky-dome.

By the same token, the underworld, the chthonic realm of the dead, seems connected to the earth/sea plane at the periphery, this plane comprising a sort of membrane separating bowllike upper and underworlds.[29] The spirit

TABLE 1: FEATURES OF YUROK MONSTERS

CREATURE	HABITAT	BENEFIT	DANGER	GUARDIAN OR PET
Great Money	sea, river, air	wealth	man-eater	+
Great Salmon	sea, river	food	drowning	+
Porpoises	sea, river, land	world order	man-eaters	+
Knewollek	sea, river	wealth, hunting luck	killer	+
Obsidian	river, spring	wealth	poison	+
Peʔpiʔr	water, air, mountains	spirit power	man-eater	−
łmeyur	underground	power	death	+
Ka·mes	sea, river	wealth	killers	−
Saʔal	springs, sea, caves	strength	disease	+
sok	water	power	poison	+
rattlesnakes	water, mountains, caves	wealth, protection	poison	+
dogs	river, mountains	hunting luck	poison	+
Thunders	underworld, ridges, water	strength, bravery	destruction	+
Earthquake	underworld	?	destruction	−
soʔo·	mountains	strength, bravery	killers	−
ʔumaʔah	mountains	power, wealth	killers	−
Bigfoot	mountains, water	wealth	man-eater	?

world may be reached either by ascending into the sky by way of the inland mountains or by going far enough out into the sea. Again, the underworld is invariably reached by descending through water—either the sea, or the river, or small alpine lakes. The dead, it should be noted, first enter a hole in the side of a hill above the village of Turip, and then descend through an underground lake. In parallel, living esotericists often make contact with underworld beings after first entering a cave, a cleft in the rocks, or other rupture in the earth-membrane.

As Bean suggests,[30] "power" comes from "outside." That is, the Yurok seeker obtains strength and bravery, generally speaking, in the underworld. Hunting and fishing luck is usually obtained on the earth-disc itself, although the beings which bring such luck to men invariably come from "outside," generally from the spirit world. Wealth, in the form of dance regalia, is obtained from the spirit world where its home is.[31] In myth, such wealth is often obtained through direct visits to the spirit world, always with the help of a spirit-being, often a monster.[32] We also find, in narratives, wealth acquisition through contact with monsters in caves and rock clefts.[33] However, in practice, as far as I have determined, wealth is normally sought through ritual ascension into the hills and mountains. Such ascensions are undertaken in both routine fashion—through the gathering of special sweathouse firewood—and through more intense questing in the high mountains. While both sorts of ascensions are bracketed within periods of ascetic training and concentration, and while both depend on the sincere prayers of supplicants to "protectors" (*ekonor*), the latter type is far more momentous and intense than the routine gathering of sweathouse wood which, however, usually serves as preparation for the high mountain power and wealth quests.[34]

While sweathouse wood gathering is considered an efficacious means of winning the approval and pity of spirit beings, its effects are gradual and generalized: wealth and power come, eventually, to the supplicant. The "high medicine" made in the mountains is, however, more direct, seekers either encountering helpful beings in their power places[35] or going themselves, in trance, beyond the sky-dome to the spirit world.[36]

We may note that, in many of the accounts of medicine making in mountain caves and the like, water figures prominently: wealth accrues to a man upon whom water drips from the roof of a cave; a man finds his wealth-bringing talisman in a water-filled hole; men dive for power in alpine lakes, and so on.

Finally, then, water as a means of access to or communication with the "outside" realms of power must be emphasized: "[Sraʔmaʔu] was a weskwilai [*wesk^{w}eloy*] or brave man. He was not afraid of any lake or bad place in the river, but would jump right into it to acquire power."[37] We have seen above that such power quests are linked with the Thunders. However, many

other beings are often involved as well. A myth relates how a man is carried across the ocean to the spirit world by one of the wo·gey, gaining wealth there; another similar journey is undertaken on the back of a sa?al, this one bringing the man fighting powers; others tell of catching various monsters in river or ocean, such encounters bringing wealth.[38]

There are, then, three means available to the living for reaching the upper and lower realms: through water, through ascent into the mountains, or through various ruptures in the earth's surface. Returning to the table, we see that all monsters are associated directly with one or more of these three approaches, predominantly with water and mountains.

Yurok monsters tend to inhabit or travel in the liminal regions of the Yurok cosmos: those areas which at once separate the levels of the tripartite universe and serve as means of passage between them. In a sense, then, the points of contact between man and these creatures may be viewed as cosmographically anomalous: neither clearly in one realm nor another.

Throughout, I have used the terms "monster," "monstrous," and so forth, in a most general sense which includes members of several taxonomic classes. The parameters of my usage have been defined by two underlying components, anomaly and danger-to-humans.

By anomaly I simply mean that monsters are sentient beings which in some way defy inclusion in ordinary classes of beings through characteristics such as size, temperament, colour, shape, or habitat which separate them from their nearest parallels in the natural world. "Monster," then, is a relative term. For example, Bigfoot is a monster insofar as, while generally humanoid, it is bigger, stronger, hairier, and meaner (in the Karok view at least) than an ordinary human being and lives in areas considered uninhabitable by humans. Bigfoot is a monster insofar as it is not a human being, yet is too humanoid to be fully an animal.

Such anomaly is clear in most of the beings considered above: huge aquatic beasts with horns, swimming, talking rocks, flying shells, and so forth. The anomaly of "reptiles" (sok) may not be immediately obvious. Yet, consider the rattlesnake: a cold blooded, egg-laying, non-flying land creature which often swims. Or, again, the redwood salamander: a four-legged water creature with vestigial gills which is often found on land. The human foetus, while apparently warm-blooded, seems aquatic.[39] While as members of a taxonomic class, sok, these "reptiles" are, by definition, not anomalous, the entire class may be understood as a collectivity of anomalies.

Dogs are anomalous in that they, unlike wolves, foxes, coyotes, and other canines, are domesticated, understand human speech, and are thought capable of speaking *back* to humans. Moreover, the dog is the only animal to which mankind is directly related, a dog having been man's first female ancestor.[40] That man has a part-animal and part-monster nature is, as we

will see, of profound import in Yurok metaphysics, as it is symbolic of a balance between what is thought of, anthropologically, as 'nature' and 'culture' in mankind.

"Reptiles" are both poisonous and power-granting, and thus comprise highly ambi-valent symbols. In this they are similar to other, more easily recognized, monsters. All Yurok monsters are, like these "reptiles," dangerous to humans yet beneficial as well—when correctly approached.

The same ambi-valence, an admixture of danger and benefit, is to be found in the symbolic components of the liminal regions favoured for monster travel and communication with monsters. Thus, water is highly beneficial as the medium of subsistence, of communication and travel, and of purification. At the same time it is very dangerous, both in an ordinary sense (high surf, rapids, floods, tidal waves) and in an extraordinary sense as the source of disease, the habitation of monsters, the carrier of poisons. Mountains, too, are the source of great good, the location of the highest spiritual exercises. Yet they hold extreme dangers as well, such as enemy peoples or monsters. Caves and rock clefts likewise provide avenues of contact with beneficial forces yet pose the dangers of the underworld: one may all too easily become trapped.[41]

I suggest that the polyvalent symbolism of these liminal regions between the earth and the underworld and spirit world expresses the multiple *potentialities* of the liminal cosmic zones. Such potentiality, particularly in the case of water, is, of course, a common symbolic attribute of such cosmographic zones. As Eliade writes, "The Waters symbolize the entire universe of the virtual; they are the *fons et origo*, the reservoir of all of the potentialities of existence."[42]

Among the Yurok the water's potentiality is most clearly expressed through the theme of transformation. For example, in the myth of the Thunders a young man dives through the water to their house, from which he emerges a new man, more powerful and complete. Other, more ordinary reflections of the theme are found in daily life in bathing following the use of the sudatory; intensive bathing and sweating are primary means of purificatory transformation both as an end in itself and as preparation for further ritual activities and duties. That is, the sweathouse and the associated bathing in creeks and rivers serve as means of transforming the practitioner from ordinary to ritual states. Such transformation represents the maximization of inherent potentialities in a given direction with the accompanying denial of other potentialities.

Here, anomaly and polyvalence seem to coincide. That is, the ambi-valent nature of both monsters and the regions which they inhabit are symbolically indexed by anomalous features. Monsters slip between ordinary taxa because they combine attributes of two or more such taxa; they are taxonomically

liminal and hence must be classified in liminal, extraordinary taxa (such as wo·gey, łmeyur, or sok). By the same token, water, mountains, and caves all comprise links between, or combinations of, specified and discrete cosmic zones. The ambi-valence of both monsters and their habitats, then, is realized at a surface level in anomaly. What is perhaps most important here is not so much the anomaly of categorization as the categorical polyvalence—the deeper, underlying level of the structure.

Monsters and liminal zones, as anomalies, constitute ruptures in the fabric of ordinary classification. Both allow heightened access to power and to wealth by human beings ordinarily bound to a less highly charged theatre of experience. It has long been accepted that such classificatory ruptures signify the intrusion of the "sacred" into the "profane."[43] Dispensing with this misleading dichotomy *vis à vis* the Yurok, I hypothesize here that in the symbolic systems of northwestern California such ruptures allow the emergence of the powerful into the realm of the ordinary; thus, the polyvalence of monsters is metonymous with the polyvalence of power itself.

As Bean points out, in native California power is "neutral." Like electricity, power is simultaneously a positive force and a destructive one, its manifestation being entirely determined by the ability of the acquiring individual to understand and control it.[44] As a Yurok friend says, "Power is just power. It's not good or bad, It's all a matter of control, of will." The danger of personal power, then, lies in its very neutrality. Uncontrolled, or controlled towards a negative end, it is harmful to human beings; controlled towards ends culturally specified as positive, it is beneficial. Here, then, neutrality equates with the more cumbersome notion of polyvalent potentiality, a notion which is in no way exclusive of actuality. That is, what is potential in power does not simply remain so, but is actualized in specific events.

I suggest that both monsters and the regions which they frequent, and in which humans make contact with them, are ambi-valent symbols of *both* good and evil. Secondly, I suggest that the polyvalence of both monsters and their habitats, represented through anomaly, in turn represents their nature as foci of potentiality and, hence, as avenues or means of human transformation. Such abstractions remain to be solidly related to ethnographic data.

INTERPRETATION

Yurok monster myths do not comprise an entertainment genre, and, as a group, they are comparable neither to the entertaining genre of animal

tales usually told to "children and strangers,"[45] nor to Euro-American "horror stories."[46] Rather, they are a part of a specific corpus of myths and narratives, essentially educational in nature, which deal with the acquisition of power in its several forms and of the emblems of personal and communal power, wealth objects.[47]

As such, their place would seem to have been, predominantly, in the "sweathouse," the locus of the education of young men towards "making man medicine," which is the culmination of a lengthy preparatory process directed towards becoming a "real man" (*pegerk*). Native experts stress that, in the training process, "to make man medicine you have to completely root out all of your fear. You can't have a trace left, because if you do you won't make it. That's what training is for, for overcoming fear."[48] The process of "overcoming fear" is a revealing one: "To be a real man is to know exactly who you are; to grow up and stop being a child." Finally, to be a real man is to be, simply, 'manly' ("independent", "rooted"). Pegerk does, after all, specifically mean "man," not "person" (*ʔoˑɬ*). To be a real man is to have separated yourself from the culturally specified negative aspects of feminity. Wealth, it would seem, comes quite naturally to such an individual: pegerk means "rich man" as well as "real man".

There are three avenues to be followed in order to, after full preparation, "make man medicine": running at night in the mountains; swimming at night in the ocean; diving into a river whirlpool. All of these avenues, as we have seen, are customary monster habitats. Monsters may, then, be explained as infantile oral-aggressive fears projected outwards, and medicine making as the overcoming of such neurotic symptoms.[49] Yet, such explanations must not be mistaken for real comprehension.[50]

BALANCE

To comprehend, rather than simply explain, Yurok medicine making, we must attend more closely to native philosophical and metaphysical concepts than to those of non-Indian psychiatry. While recent analyses stemming from the latter body of theory have stressed the "sacred" in regards to power questing and wealth acquisition among the Yurok,[51] the sacred/profane dichotomy does not correspond precisely to any Yurok mode of classification. Rather than speaking in these terms, Yurok experts today speak of "balance."

Thus, in telling me about the characteristics of a "real," or "complete," man (pegerk), a highly Yurok-trained friend told me

> There are two sides to everything; everything has two sides, like a coin. you can't have one without the other. A real man knows this, and he sees both sides of everything; he has to. When he has defined the two sides, then he can keep them in balance. That's what a real man does, he keeps everything in balance. You have two sides too, of course, and being a real man means keeping yourself in balance, too. An ordinary person is lopsided, so he doesn't amount to much; he doesn't have much will power, and he can't see both sides of things. He lives by accident [synthetic paraphrase].[52]

Thus, training leading towards becoming a real man rests on the discovery of the principle of balance, and, I have been told, the initial training of a pubescent boy thought capable of "cutting the mustard" by his elders is directed towards his discovery of the principle of complementarity, this being accomplished largely through the solitary contemplation of the natural world ("learning to see," literally, "perceive" [*sʌnʌyʌh*]). Such perceptual training is accompanied by training in the technologies which are, among "ordinary" or "low" people, sex-specific. That is, a young novice pegerk learns enough of women's technology to be entirely self-sufficient, and a novice shaman (*kegey*), among the Yurok almost invariably a female, learns many "men's things," usually in the sweathouse along with the young men.[53]

The emphasis on balance extends both to the actual conduct of training, for both male and female initiates, and to the ordering of personal conduct. Thus, my expert friend stresses the importance of alternating intense mental concentration (*kocpoks*) with equally intense physical exercise, or "training" (*hohkep*) while in preparation for "making medicine." Again, he tells of his mentor's conduct.

> Sure, R. would train hard for a long time. But enough is enough—you got to keep it in balance. So when he'd gotten as far as he could, he'd knock it off. You can't keep that up because you'd exhaust yourself. So he'd kick back for awhile, maybe get stinking drunk. People'd come, find him drunk, laid up in his bed with a woman. They'd say he wasn't a real high man. But they didn't know. Ordinary people have lots of expectations, but they don't know what it really takes [synthetic paraphrase].

This sort of balance in the conduct of one's personal life is clearly reflected

in another consultant's gloss of the term *mʌwʌksʌgʌ*, "beauty" or "purity," the essential quality of the real "high" man:

> That's a fella who's a pure man, a good man. He could go up into the [highest] places and talk with the Creator, and yet he could come down and talk with anybody, be just an ordinary person and not put himself above anybody.

The concept of balance is most clearly illuminated by the Yurok concept of "the middle" (*wogi, wogwu*). As Dundes points out, the importance of the middle position is consistently emphasized throughout the corpus of Yurok myths.[54] The middle (of a prairie, a river, a row of houses, a single house, a line of dancers, and so on) is the best, the most dangerous, the most valuable, the most powerful position. The house of the village's wealthiest man is in the middle of the row of houses. The monsters are in the middle of the river. The best wealth objects are in the middle of the danceline and are carried by the most powerful dancers.

Finally, we should note that the attributes of the middle are also those of the real men, the pegerk. They, too, represent the best, the most powerful, the purest, and the most dangerous, through sorcery powers.[55]

What emerges from an investigation of the Yurok concept of balance, then, is an understanding of the spiritual or the sacred as that which manifests balance, the quality of the middle. This interpretation is justified by a further consideration of the concept of beauty. A trained expert says, regarding one who "walks in beauty" (is *mʌwʌksʌgʌ*)

> He is in a state where all things are *known*, deep, deep down, as portions of "Creation." "Creation" has no name—no dimensions, no substance. It is *every*thing. When one walks in beauty one touches the ground with reverence each time he puts his foot down, each mouthful of food, each time you touch something. You can tell a person who walks in beauty by the way he looks at things, touches with sight.

This expert says that he learned to "walk in beauty" when he made his final, "high medicine" in the inland mountains; that after this occasion he no longer saw "things," but only "creations." The ability to see all things as

"beautiful," as "creations," results in the full experience of complementarity, of the absolute balance of reality.

THE INCORPORATION OF MONSTERS

Monsters, like both the regions which they inhabit and the real men who conquer them or manage to use them for their own ends (such as power acquisition), are, we have seen, polyvalent and anomalous, symbolic congeries of both the best and the worst, categorically liminal. In this, monsters partake of the essential quality of the middle, of balance. They comprise unities of opposites (or, in Yurok terms, complements) which transcend polarity, and by extension, clear categorization.

In her seminal work on ritual categories and pollution, Mary Douglas views the incorporation of the anomalous and the abominable in mythic and ritual productions as a form of 'composting'.[56] She goes on to speak of such productions as achieving "a union of opposites which is a source of power for good," growing out of "men's common urge to make a unity of all their experience and to overcome distinctions and separations in acts of at-one-ment," concluding that "any ritual which expresses the happy union of opposites is also an apt vehicle for essentially religious themes."[57]

What Douglas suggests here seems highly pertinent to the Yurok case. While I have emphasized the benign qualities of Yurok monsters—as helping spirit beings—their true ambi-valence must not be lost sight of. That is, they are considered, above all, dangerous, destructive, and highly negative: objects of fear to be destroyed. Yet, at the same time, they make good pets and bring those who master them many sorts of benefits, primarily power and its emblems. They are both "abominations," in Douglas' strong words, and symbols of completion, of the middle, of balance. The two are not, in Yurok metaphysics, mutually incompatible: an abomination is a "creation," too.

These various threads are neatly tied together in the single person of Pulekukwerek, who is, along with the trickster Wohpekumew, one of the two great world-ordering culture heroes of the "beforetime."

Pulekukwerek is the epitome of the ascetic Yurok man of power. He is the "never eating one" who subsists on tobacco. Unlike Wohpekumew, he is entirely disinterested in women. He is the master of both rivers and oceans, making them safe for travel by canoe, and he is the slayer of the monsters who plagued the world incessantly in the beginning. Along with his erstwhile friend, he institutes the wealth quest and the display of wealth in the great dances. His power is absolute, his strength untiring, and his bravery beyond reproach (all in contrast to Wohpekumew). He institutes the sweathouse for

the training of men, and himself trains his "nephews," Wohpekumew's son and grandson. He is the model of the real, complete man.

However, in contrast to Wohpekumew who, although capable of many transformations, is essentially human in appearance, Pulekukwerek is monster-like. He is the "sharp pointed one behind," a reference to the sharp horn which grows from his buttocks. This horn, of course, immediately brings to mind the horns of Knewollek and the ka·mes, the elongated snouts of the sa?al, the fangs of rattlesnakes, and, finally, the shape of Great Money and all (man-eating) dentalia shells. Among the humanoid wo·gey, only Kewomer, Wohpekumew's grandson and Pulekukwerek's best student, is similarly deformed, being, in fact, described on occasion as a horned sea-serpent.[58]

Pulekukwerek seldom makes use of his monstrous horn: it is simply there. On two illuminating occasions, however, it figures prominently. In one myth he uses his horn to prevent himself from sliding down the ladder of a house pit and into the fire which has been laid by monsters to destroy him.[59] Fire is the weapon which Pulekukwerek himself uses to destroy most monsters, hence it may be understood, in this context, as the primary symbol of his power (while transformation and trickery are Wohpekumew's). A literal reading of the coded message in the incident, then, is that Pulekukwerek is saved from being destroyed by his own power through his monstrous appendage.

The only other use the hero makes of his horn is in gouging a slash down the face of a great boulder near the village of Kenek. The dust created by his mighty slide was given to the post-wo·gey humans as medicine against blindness.[60] Pulekukwerek himself has, in myth, the ability to cure blindness. "Seeing" (*sʌnʌyʌh*), a consultant says, means "to see what is really there; in your mind, in the world—it's all seeing." As outlined above, the aim of perfecting "seeing" is the development of the ability to "see beauty," the presence of Creation in all things. "Seeing," then, is the key to the discovery of the complementarity and balance in reality. It is the means of recognizing the middle, and, as such, is the true mark of real manhood. Pulekukwerek, part man and part monster, provides the means to "see." The nature of the model of the real man which he provides becomes clearer.

Pulekukwerek destroys monsters. That is, as Posinsky suggested, he successfully struggles with his own instincts towards undisciplined self-satisfaction.[61] By the same token, the Yurok novice in training to make man medicine must overcome his oral cravings through fasting and thirsting, his sexual desire through continence, his greed through humble restraint in the wealth quest.[62] Yet, the real man must keep himself in balance least he be exhausted and defeated by his own power. Thus, he must marry and share his life with a woman and with children who alone can, according to a Yurok friend, make a man complete.

The real man (who is also a "rich" man) is not, then, committed to a

simple form of self-denial and world-rejection: he is, rather, committed to balance, to keeping in the middle. The monsters must be acknowledged as a significant part of balanced, total reality. They must be incorporated as well as being subdued. The latter, I suspect, gives the essential energy for accomplishing the former. Thus, in myth, successful encounters with monsters leading to enhanced wealth and power are most usually preceded by periods of intense, ascetic training. All of this is to say that it is the control of monsters, not their absolute destruction, which is the earmark of the real man.

A Yurok friend has often spoken of "control" as well:

> We cannot speak of power, only of control. A real man lives a life of control, of will. He makes his definitions, figures the price of what he wants, and then he acts. Nothing can stop him then—you'd have to kill him to stop him. Because he is completely in control, he does everything on purpose, we can say he has power. But we'd just say he has control, because if you have power but can't use it on purpose, every time, anytime you want to, what good is it? Control is real power, and without it there's nothing [synthetic paraphrase].

In this context it is to be noted that the Yurok "world renewal" dances (*helomey*) were held in order to "balance the earth," to make it stable through correcting the uncontrolled actions of human beings which threatened to tilt the earth-disc, causing floods, tidal waves, and other natural disasters. Among the effects of the great dances were the prevention of rattlesnake bites and of diseases (caused by the saʔal). That is, the prayers of the officiants (always pegerk) and, most importantly, the display of the wealth objects belonging to the pegerk of the group—a public manifestation of power —maintained the earth's balance and kept the monsters under control.[63]

CONCLUSION

The role of monsters in Yurok culture can only be understood as multileveled and cumulative. That is, monsters are best understood as representing different things to different people at different levels of training and development.

For women, children, and strangers, if indeed they heard them at all, the myths which have been partially investigated here in all likelihood traditionally comprised "horror stories."[64] Yurok monsters, I suspect, served the same functions as bogey men everywhere do. Yet, to restrict analyses to those

growing out of an explanation of monsters as simply objects of fear is to neglect far more complex, interesting, and important possibilities.

For, if monsters inspire fear, they also provide means for overcoming it and, through this act, attaining a higher level of individuation and self-actualization. It is this sort of development, into real manhood, which is indexed by the attainment of bravery and by the possession of wealth. That is, wealth, attainable through confrontations with monsters, is an emblem of spiritual (or psychological, if you prefer) maturity—of power.

Still, however, this level of attainment is incomplete, as is an analysis hinging on the supposition that monsters, like fear and immaturity, or femininity, are merely to be overcome. Why, we must ask, if monsters are simply projections of non-objective, generalized fears, infantile cravings, and the like, onto objective, supernatural embodiments, do these embodiments themselves represent, variously, wealth objects, models of manhood, and direct means to the acquisition of power? This question is relevant in view of the fact that wealth, manhood, and power are all the earmarks of precisely those who have overcome fear, infantile drives, and femininity. Here, it would seem, we must recognize the efforts of archaic philosophers to resolve the apparently paradoxical nature of reality, revealing its underlying unity, its balance. The real man does not reject femininity, he incorporates it, as the *kegey* (also a "real man") incorporates masculinity. Pulekukwerek not only destroys monsters through his ascetic, powerful life; he incorporates them into his very being. Great Money and Obsidian not only travel about eating men and poisoning them, they represent the quintessential power objects as well.

Finally, for the real man monsters are simply another creation, a resolved balance of complementary forces. Like the middle which they personify, they are ambi-valent: pure potential. They are both the absolute danger of mortality and Creation itself, the source of all power. As "seeing beauty" is, in effect, the destruction of all categories (*everything* becomes a "creation"). so monsters, categorically anomalous, may be understood as including in potential all categories, as do the liminal regions which they inhabit. They are, then, in the highest, or "beautiful," sense, nothing special once you know what they are.

Notes

1. Research incorporated in this paper was supported in part by the Melville and Elizabeth Jacobs Fund of the Whatcom Museum and by the Danforth Foundation. I am also grateful to Terrance Evans, University of North Carolina, and to John MacAloon, University of Chicago, whose comments on an earlier draft have been incorporated here. Finally, Marjorie Halpin of the University of British Columbia has provided both energy and guidance throughout. Taking full resposibility for the use and misuse of these kind colleagues' responses, I thank all heartily.
2. J.P. Harrington, *Tobacco Use among the Karok Indians,* Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin no. 94 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1932), pp. 257–60.
3. Ibid., p. 259n.
4. A.L. Kroeber, *Yurok Myths,* folkloristic commentary by Alan Dundes (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976), A10.
5. See P. Drucker, "The Tolowa and Their Southwest Oregon Kin," *University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology* 36, no. 4 (1937): 268.
6. In my "Structure and Meaning in Yurok World View," manuscript, 1977.
7. See Kroeber, *Yurok Myths,* Y1, T1.
8. Ibid., T1, T3.
9. Ibid., C21, Q2.
10. Ibid., p. 461n.
11. Ibid., A151, C1.
12. See R. Spott and A.L. Kroeber, "Yurok Narratives," *University of California Publications in American Archaelogy and Ethnology* 35, no. 9 (1942): 227–32 and Kroeber, *Yurok Myths,* N1.
13. Kroeber, *Yurok Myths,* A15.
14. Ibid., A11.
15. Ibid., B2, B6.
16. See A.L. Kroeber and E.W. Gifford, "World Renewal: A Cult System of Native Northwest California," *Anthropological Records* 13, no. 1 (1949) and H.N. Rust, "The Obsidian Blades of California," *American Anthropologist,* n.s. 7(1905): 688–95.
17. Kroeber, *Yurok Myths,* Flp.
18. Ibid.
19. See Koreber, *Yurok Myths.*
20. Spott and Kroeber, "Yurok Narratives," p. 217.
21. See D.K. Valory, "Yurok Doctors and Devils" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1970) for the most complete discussion of "devils."
22. Spott and Kroeber, "Yurok Narratives," p. 229.
23. Ibid., p. 233–38.
24. Ibid.
25. Lucy Thompson, *To the American Indian* (Eureka, Ca.: Cummins Print Shop, 1916).
26. See B.H. Cantanish, "Did Ancient Mysteries Rule along the Trail?" (1904), reprinted in *Redwood Cavalcade* (1968). While the Yurok, unlike many of their southern neighbors, have neither rattlesnake shamans nor public displays involving manipulation of rattlesnakes by cult members (see A.L. Kroeber, *Handbook of the Indians of California,* Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin no. 78 [Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1925], p. 854), there is an esoteric complex centred around these reptiles. A consultant has described the use of rattlesnake heads in making an arrow poison, as well as "making rattlesnake medicine" on a large rock in the Klamath River. This was, I was told, "earth medicine, to keep me walking firmly on the ground"—and, presumably, safe from rattlesnake bites.
27. "Ambi-valence" is used as a term suitable to the analysis of symbolic and cognitive

phenomena in which two possible and apparently contradicting meanings or values are equally present. It is preferred here to "ambivalence," a term understood as related to an unconscious, psychic phenomenon.

28. See L.J. Bean, "Power and Its Applications in Native California," in *The Anthropology of Power,* eds. R.D. Fogelson and J.N. Adams (New York: Academic Press, 1977), pp. 117–29.
29. See Buckley, "Structure and Meaning in Yurok World View."
30. Bean, "Power and Its Applications."
31. See Kroeber, *Yurok Myths.*
32. Ibid., T5.
33. Spott and Kroeber, "Yurok Narratives," pp. 167–71.
34. See, amongst others: ibid., p.227; Kroeber, *Yurok Myths,* p. 20; Harrington, *Tobacco Use,* pp.200–207.
35. For example, Spott and Kroeber, "Yurok Narratives," pp. 167–71.
36. See Valory, "Yurok Doctors and Devils."
37. Spott and Kroeber, "Yurok Narratives," p. 167.
38. See Kroeber, *Yurok Myths.*
39. For further discussion see Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966).
40. Spott and Kroeber, "Yurok Narratives," pp. 233–38.
41. For example, Kroeber, *Yurok Myths,* T3.
42. Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols,* trans. P. Mairet (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969), p.151.
43. See A. Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage,* trans. M.B. Vizedom and G.L. Caffee (1909; reprinted., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).
44. Bean, "Power and Its Applications," pp. 118–20.
45. Kroeber, *Yurok Myths,* p. 316.
46. In this I disagree with D.E. Marrant, "Variations on a Theme: Some Northern California Horror Stories," *Western Folklore* 29, no. 4 (1970): 257–67.
47. See J. Bushnell and D. Bushnell, "Wealth, Work and World View in Native Northwest California," in *Flowers of the Wind,* ed. T.C. Blackburn (Soccoro, N.M.: Ballena Press, 1977).
48. See Spott and Kroeber, "Yurok Narratives," p. 217.
49. See Bushnell and Bushnell, "Wealth, Work and World View" and others.
50. See P. Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976).
51. See Bushnell and Bushnell, "Wealth, Work and World View."
52. I have known this consultant since 1970, and we have done a great deal of talking since then, often going over the same topics several times through the years. Quotations cited as "synthetic paraphrases" are not direct quotations but synthesized ones which incorporate statements made on a single topic at different times, as these are reflected in my mnemonic notes.
53. See Valory, "Yurok Doctors and Devils."
54. In Kroeber, *Yurok Myths,* pp. xxxv–vi.
55. See Bean, "Power and Its Applications."
56. Douglas, *Purity and Danger,* p. 163.
57. Ibid., p. 169.
58. For all of the above discussion of Pulekukwerek see Kroeber, *Yurok Myths.*
59. Ibid., A15–A20.
60. Ibid., C1.
61. S.H. Posinsky, "The Problem of Yurok Anality," *The American Image* 14, no.1 (1957).
62. See E.H. Erikson, "Observations on the Yurok: Childhood and World Image," *University of California Publications in Archaeology and Ethnology* 35, no. 8 (1943): 257–301.
63. See Kroeber and Gifford, "World Renewal."
64. See Marrant, "Variations on a Theme."